

People tend to collapse values and morals together but there is a distinction. Values are not right or wrong, they just are. When we are honoring our values – living in alignment with them, particularly our core values, we are happy. We feel more like our true selves, we have a “free to be me” spring in our step; we are in our “happy place”. When we find ourselves in an environment that is not compatible with our values or worse yet compromising them, we are not happy. When we are unaware of our core values, we can inadvertently compromise our values and diverge from the truth of who we really are. As a response, we become numb and settle into a less than happy place.

How do we find authentic happiness? We must honor who we are and live a life that is in alignment with our core values, as much and as often as possible. How do you discover your core values?

Step 1: *Grounding your feelings in experience*

It is essential that we use life experiences to discover our core values. So tell me two stories. The first being about a time in your life that you would not want to repeat. I’m not looking for deep dark trauma, loss or secrets, rather describe a time that just wasn’t great. Time and space of the experience is not important. The story could have taken place 5 days ago, or 15 years ago, and experienced in 5 minutes or over years. It doesn’t matter. Think of a time when you were frustrated, felt stuck, unhappy or living someone else’s dream? What made it an unhappy time? Think about what why it wasn’t great? What is underneath the drama and emotion – how did you feel inside when you were in this situation and what was going on around you? Capture this story on paper in a format that is easy for you.

Ok, now let’s flip it around and tell me a story about a time in your life that was magical. A time when you were on the top of your game, “in your element”, or when you felt powerful...tell me that story. What was it about this time that made you feel so happy? What was going on and how were you showing up? What was happening around you that caused you to feel like you could totally and fully be yourself? Again, capture this story in a way that is easy for you.

These stories, in comparison, often mirror the same set of values. For example, let’s examine a person, John, who values nature, perseverance, achievement and recognition. In the first story, the yucky story, John relates a summer where he worked long hours in a laboratory basement on experiments for his thesis that once again failed to show the results he expected. The second story, the good story, he relates, is an experience when he got first place in the Bridger Ridge Run and felt expansive when he crossed the finish line after a grueling but rewarding run across the Bridger Mountains. In the first story, John is not in an environment or situation that honors his core values. Although he persevered, John was not in nature and couldn’t claim achievement or gain recognition from failed experiments. In the second story, John is feeling happy because all these values are being honored and fully expressed in the moment.

Step 2: *Discover your top 10 values*

Once you have your stories written out or in mind, look at a comprehensive list of values. Steve Pavlina has a great list; it is attached for your use. Focus on the feelings that the above-mentioned stories evoke and run through your values list with a highlighter marking the ones that resonate with you. The stories are important because without considering life experiences, you often “should on yourself” and choose values out of guilt or shame and miss the significance of this exercise. My first time through the values list, I felt intense guilt for not choosing “family” as a core value because I believed the “right” answer should include family. Keep in mind values just are; they are not right or wrong. Move quickly, but methodically through the list. Stay out of your head and grounded in your body. Quickly check in with how your body feels with each word. What does it feel like if you were to honor or compromise that value? See if you feel strongly at either or both extremes. For example, do you feel excited imagining a life honoring this value. Do you feel restricted and fatigued imagining a life where you compromise the value?

Another way to consider each value is as if it was a jacket you were trying on at the store. Try the jacket on. How does it fit? Is it yummy? Does it make you feel sexy in your own skin? If not, try on the next one. There is no judgment.

For example, try on “accomplishment” how does it feel to you? Do you feel expansive? How’s your breath – is it shallow or deep and strong? Do you feel anxiety or confinement when considering what it feels like to “be in accomplishment”? Just notice, without any judgment. Highlight the values that give you a positive and pleasurable feeling in your body. Unless there has been trauma, your body will not lie to you. Allow it to guide you to what feels right and stay out of your head. Resist analyzing each value as if you “should” or “should not” have it as a core value.

Step 3: *Refine your list of values*

Accumulate a list of the values that elicit a strong response from you. Once the list feels complete, begin grouping like values. How you group them is totally and completely unique to you. The groupings do not have to make sense to anyone except for you. Ideally you’d group them into a few “buckets”...anywhere from 5-12 (try not to go over 10 categories). Again, there is no right or wrong way to do this. Some buckets might have 20 or more words while others may only have 3-5 or even just a single word.

Once you feel complete with your categories, find a word or value that best describes that “bucket”. It may be a word from the grouped list of words, or you can make up a new word that best describes it. 3-5 values with the most points are your most important “core” values.

Step 4: *Go to planet Zogg*

Now for clarifying your values. This part of the exercise can be surprisingly difficult. I recommend you work through it with trusted friends to keep you honest and make it fun. Get in a playful mindset – and tap into your imagination because we are going on a journey to planet Zogg!

Attached is the values clarification worksheet; follow the instructions using the final top-10 values-categories. On planet Zogg you have everything you need in terms of food, water, shelter, etc. (this is for those of you who have a high value for security - happy face). Planet Zogg is similar to Earth with one difference. On planet Zogg you can only honor one value in a lifetime. As you board your spacecraft you come to a basket filled with your core values. Draw two. As you examine your draw, ask yourself would you rather be fully in alignment with one value versus the other. As you chose, say aloud “I chose [*insert value*] over [*insert value*]”... and continue as you compare all the values on your list.

For example, upon comparing the two values *grit* vs *humor* you determine that there is no way you can live on planet Zogg without humor. Upon selecting humor over *grit* say out-loud: “I choose *humor* over *grit*.” Then *humor* gets a point. Do this until you have completed all pairwise combinations over your list of core values. The 3-5 values with the most points are your most important “core” values.

Typically, you are hard-wired for these values and they have been important to you your whole life and will continue to be so.

Step 5: *Inspired action*

Take inspired action It's critical to your authentic happiness and well-being that you honor and live in alignment to your top 3-5 values. Understand that we compromise our values every day and be aware of where you make compromises. The cause of feelings of discomfort, anxiety and unhappiness can often be traced to circumstances where we unintentionally compromised our core values and because we were unaware of it we forget who we are. We can agree to compromise a core value if we feel it will ultimately lead to a place of greater honor and fulfillment. Be intentional and aware of this agreement and commit to it for a limited and finite duration. The longer you are in compromise, the greater energy it takes to get back in alignment with who you truly are and remember that you have everything you need to live a life of great fulfillment. Determine what you can do today to take inspired action towards honoring your core value(s).

Identify one thing you can start doing or stop doing that will create more alignment with your top values. If your are not able to commit to inspired action remember that simply being aware of your core values increase your alignment and assist you in remembering the extraordinary, inspiring and engaging person you truly are.

List of Values

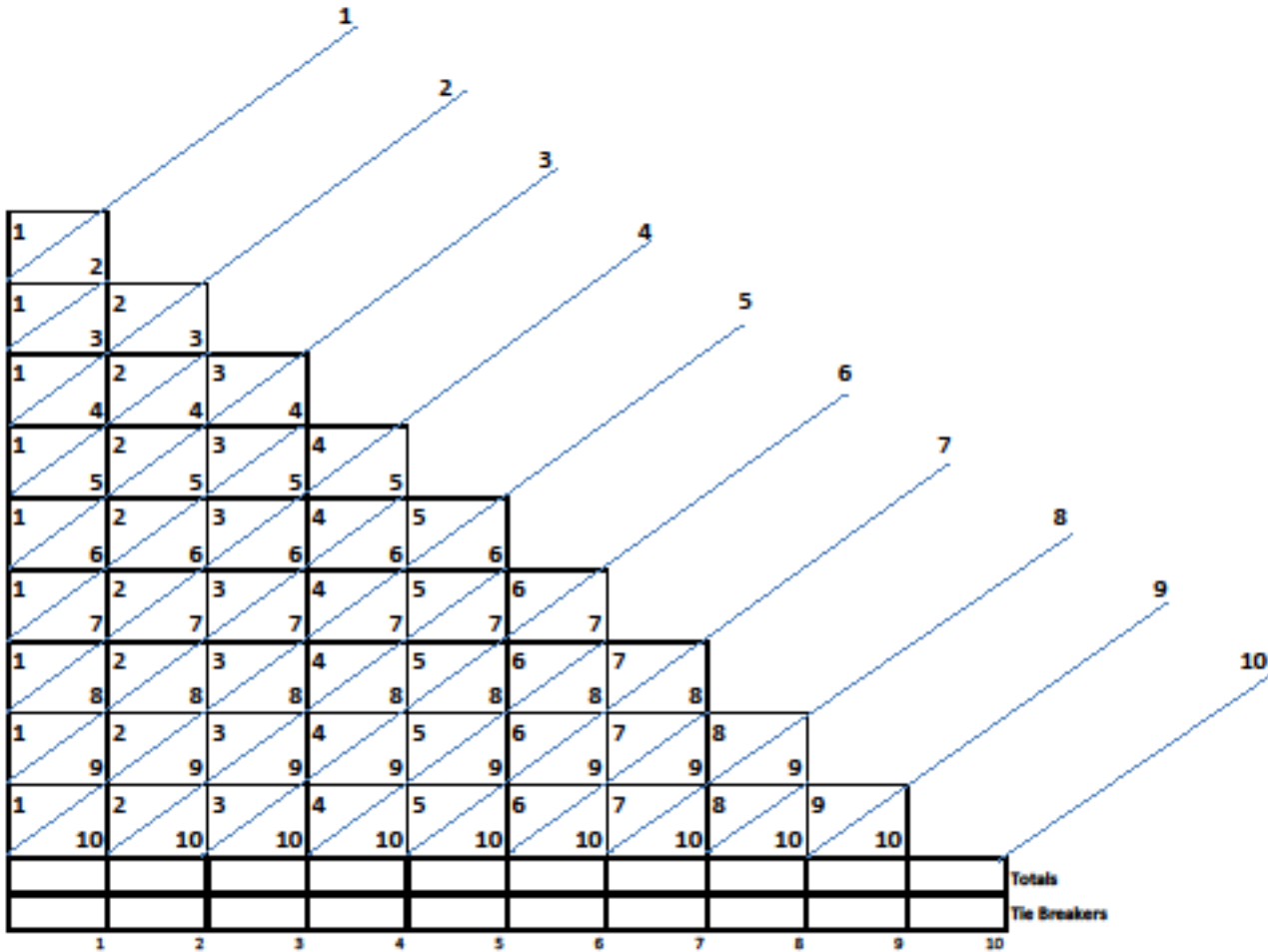
Abundance
Acceptance
Accessibility
Accomplishment
Accountability
Accuracy
Achievement
Acknowledgment
Activeness
Adaptability
Adoration
Adroitness
Advancement
Adventure
Affection
Affluence
Aggressiveness
Agility
Alertness
Altruism
Amazement
Ambition
Amusement
Anticipation
Appreciation
Approachability
Approval
Art
Articulacy
Artistry
Assertiveness
Assurance
Attentiveness
Attractiveness
Audacity
Availability
Awareness
Awe
Balance
Beauty
Being the best
Belonging
Benevolence
Bliss
Boldness
Bravery
Brilliance
Buoyancy
Calmness
Camaraderie
Candor
Capability
Care
Carefulness
Celebrity
Certainty
Challenge
Change
Charity
Charm
Chastity
Cheerfulness
Clarity
Cleanliness
Clear-mindedness
Cleverness
Closeness
Comfort
Commitment
Community
Compassion
Competence
Competition
Completion
Composure
Concentration
Confidence
Conformity
Congruency
Connection
Consciousness
Conservation
Consistency
Contentment
Continuity
Contribution
Control
Conviction
Conviviality
Coolness
Cooperation
Cordiality
Correctness
Country
Courage
Courtesy
Craftiness
Creativity
Credibility
Cunning
Curiosity
Daring
Decisiveness
Decorum
Deference
Delight
Dependability
Depth
Desire
Determination
Devotion
Devoutness
Dexterity
Dignity
Diligence
Direction
Directness
Discipline
Discovery
Discretion
Diversity
Dominance
Dreaming
Drive
Duty
Dynamism
Eagerness
Ease
Economy
Ecstasy
Education
Effectiveness
Efficiency
Elation
Elegance

List of Values

Empathy
Encouragement
Endurance
Energy
Enjoyment
Entertainment
Enthusiasm
Environmentalism
Ethics
Euphoria
Excellence
Excitement
Exhilaration
Expectancy
Expediency
Experience
Expertise
Exploration
Expressiveness
Extravagance
Extroversion
Exuberance
Fairness
Faith
Fame
Family
Fascination
Fashion
Fearlessness
Ferocity
Fidelity
Fierceness
Financial independence
Firmness
Fitness
Flexibility
Flow
Fluency
Focus
Fortitude
Frankness
Freedom
Friendliness
Friendship
Frugality
Fun
Gallantry
Generosity
Gentility
Giving
Grace
Gratitude
Gregariousness
Growth
Guidance
Happiness
Harmony
Health
Heart
Helpfulness
Heroism
Holiness
Honesty
Honor
Hopefulness
Hospitality
Humility
Humor
Hygiene
Imagination
Impact
Impartiality
Independence
Individuality
Industry
Influence
Ingenuity
Inquisitiveness
Insightfulness
Inspiration
Integrity
Intellect
Intelligence
Intensity
Intimacy
Intrepidity
Introspection
Introversion
Intuition
Intuitiveness
Inventiveness
Investing
Involvement
Joy
Judiciousness
Justice
Keeness
Kindness
Knowledge
Leadership
Learning
Liberation
Liberty
Lightness
Liveliness
Logic
Longevity
Love
Loyalty
Majesty
Making a difference
Marriage
Mastery
Maturity
Meaning
Meekness
Mellowness
Meticulousness
Mindfulness
Modesty
Motivation
Mysteriousness
Nature
Neatness
Nerve
Nonconformity
Obedience
Open-mindedness
Openness
Optimism
Order
Organization
Originality
Outdoors
Outlandishness

List of Values

Outrageousness	Religiousness	Spirituality	Warmheartedness
Partnership	Reputation	Spontaneity	Warmth
Patience	Resilience	Spunk	Watchfulness
Passion	Resolution	Stability	Wealth
Peace	Resolve	Status	Willfulness
Perceptiveness	Resourcefulness	Stealth	Willingness
Perfection	Respect	Stillness	Winning
Perkiness	Responsibility	Strength	Wisdom
Perseverance	Rest	Structure	Wittiness
Persistence	Restraint	Success	Wonder
Persuasiveness	Reverence	Support	Worthiness
Philanthropy	Richness	Supremacy	Youthfulness
Piety	Rigor	Surprise	Zea
Playfulness	Sacredness	Sympathy	
Pleasantness	Sacrifice	Synergy	
Pleasure	Sagacity	Teaching	
Poise	Saintliness	Teamwork	
Polish	Sanguinity	Temperance	
Popularity	Satisfaction	Thankfulness	
Potency	Science	Thoroughness	
Power	Security	Thoughtfulness	
Practicality	Self-control	Thrift	
Pragmatism	Selflessness	Tidiness	
Precision	Self-reliance	Timeliness	
Preparedness	Self-respect	Traditionalism	
Presence	Sensitivity	Tranquility	
Pride	Sensuality	Transcendence	
Privacy	Serenity	Trust	
Proactivity	Service	Trustworthiness	
Professionalism	Sexiness	Truth	
Prosperity	Sexuality	Understanding	
Prudence	Sharing	Unflappability	
Punctuality	Shrewdness	Uniqueness	
Purity	Significance	Unity	
Rationality	Silence	Usefulness	
Realism	Silliness	Utility	
Reason	Simplicity	Valor	
Reasonableness	Sincerity	Variety	
Recognition	Skillfulness	Victory	
Recreation	Solidarity	Vigor	
Refinement	Solitude	Virtue	
Reflection	Sophistication	Vision	
Relaxation	Soundness	Vitality	
Reliability	Speed	Vivacity	
Relief	Spirit	Volunteering	



- 1 Print out and write your top 10 values to prioritize, in any order.
- 2 Remember you are making a trip to "planet Zogg" where you live in complete alignment with one and only one value. When choosing say out loud "I choose __ (value) __ over __ (value) __". Circle the number of the value you prefer.
- 3 *Do not think heavily - just go with your first "gut feeling". Trust yourself.*
 Count the number of times each value was circled. Place that number in the "totals" box.
Remember grid runs in both directions, there will be 9 comparisons.
- 4 If two values are circled the same number of times, compare again and give the one you most prefer another half point.
- 5 Once you have your order of preference, list your top 3-5 vales. These are your core values.

Values

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____
- 4 _____
- 5 _____